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ABSTRACT

A 1983 bibliography on sex, language, and communication included many studies from the communication literature as well as from psychology, linguistics, sociology, and many other fields. It appeared at the time that the number of studies on the subject was beginning to increase. Reviewers have noted the increasing growth of gender and communication research in the communication field. This paper describes a research project which analyzed what types of studies dealing with gender have been published in major communications journals in the past five years. The analysis determined that such articles tended to be reports of quantitative studies focusing on sex differences in isolated variables of speech. Such studies tend to take sex as a main predictor variable in order to document its effect on the criterion variable, their aim being to generalize from the specific to the universal. Increasing numbers of works, mostly done by feminists, have appeared raising consciousness of the masculine bias in the traditional, positivist paradigm of scientific research. For those doing research on gender and communication from a feminist perspective, women's communication must be studied in terms of how it constructs not only gender, but also their cultural, racial, and social identity and their interaction with gender. (One appendix containing 83 references is attached.) (SG)

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Gender Politics:

A Review of Journals and Feminist Scholarship

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Abstract

This paper analyzes what type of studies dealing with gender has been published in major communication journals in the past five years. Such articles tended to be reports of quantitative studies focusing on sex differences in isolated variables of speech. The limits of these studies and the possible contribution of feminist scholarship on gender and communication are discussed.

Gender Politics:
A Review of Journals and Feminist Scholarship

Beginning with Bibliographies: An Introduction.

The bibliography on sex, language and communication compiled by Thorne, Kramarae and Henley (1983), included many studies from the communication literature as well as from psychology, linguistics, sociology, and many other fields. The number of studies appearing across disciplines was beginning to increase during that time. With the accelerated growth of interest in the issue since then, it would be impossible to compile an updated version of equal comprehensiveness. This becomes clear by taking two bibliographies that appeared since in Women and Language (Clarke, 1989; Treichler, 1986), which, despite their focus on one specific area of gender and language research, includes a large amount of literature from various disciplines working from various standpoints. The diversity is clear just from looking at the titles of periodicals and journals the studies were included in. Treichler's bibliography on "Language, Feminism, Theory" had entries from nearly fifty journals and periodicals, and Clarke's "Language and Sex Bibliography" (itself divided into two parts; only the latter part on "Sex differences in language production" considered here) had more than ninety.

But, strangely, those bibliographies do not include any more studies from so-called mainstream communication journals than their predecessor. Of course, whether a certain study is included in a bibliography depends on the nature of both the study and the

focus of the bibliography itself. The one by Treichler (1986) dealing specifically with feminist theory and language, had only six out of a total of 289 works included that were published in major communication journals (of which four were out of the special issue on feminist critique of popular culture in Communication, 9, 1986). This seems to indicate that few articles taking a feminist perspective appears in these journals, a point also made by Karen Foss (1989), and Foss and Foss (1989). But it should also be noted that although Clarke's bibliography (1989) was not specifically feminist, fewer than 7% of the total works (nineteen out of 286) came from mainstream communication journals.

It is not that there are no communication studies done focusing on gender. Reviewers have noted the increasing growth of gender and communication research in this field (e.g., Scult, 1986; Spitzack & Carter, 1987; Staley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1989). From the number of articles reviewed in speech communication journals by Foss and Foss (1983, 1989), it is clear that a focus on gender has gradually become recognized as legitimate for publishable research. Simultaneously, increasing number of works, mostly done by feminists, have appeared raising consciousness of the masculine bias in the traditional, positivist paradigm of scientific research. These feminists are not only questioning and rejecting the methodologies and assumptions such paradigm presents, but are developing a new paradigm to work from in doing "feminist scholarship."

What is feminist scholarship? Its general guidelines are: the purpose of the research is that it is for women (Rakow, 1987;

Langellier & Hall, 1989), and that it addresses women's own lives and experiences in their own words (DeVault, 1986; DuBois, 1980; Foss & Foss, 1989; Langellier & Hall, 1989; Rakow, 1987; Reinharz, 1980; Spitzack & Carter, 1987, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1980); there is no dichotomy, no separation between the researcher and the researched (Du Bois, 1980; Foss & Foss, 1989; Langellier & Hall, 1989; Oakley, 1981; Rakow, 1987; Reinharz, 1980; Spitzack & Carter, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1980); and the rejection of "objectivity" or only one reality and the quantitative-method-centeredness in research (Du Bois, 1980; Langellier & Hall, 1989; Oakley, 1981; Rakow, 1987; Spender, 1980; Spitzack & Carter, 1987, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1980). In the field of communication, the use of qualitative methods such as ethnography is advocated (Jenkins & Kramarae, 1981; Rakow, 1987). As an example, Lana Rakow (1987) describes her own research project on women's use of telephone in a small rural town. Other examples in interpersonal and small-group research are Carole Spitzack (1988) 's study on "body talk," which analyzes women's interview discourse on weight and physical appearance, Hall and Langellier (1988) 's analysis of mother-daughter's storytelling strategies, Melanie and Steve Booth-Butterfield (1988) 's study on the "jock talk" of university women's basketball team, and more recently, Victoria DeFrancisco (1990) 's study on the interaction of heterosexual couples, to name but a few.

But despite calls for such feminist scholarship (Rakow, 1986, 1987; Spitzack & Carter, 1987), the mainstream trend of studies on gender have not changed so much from what used to prevail--those

that focus on finding gender differences in observed isolated variables of speech (Thorne, Kramarae & Henley, 1983). The method used in these studies is to take sex as a main predictor variable in order to document its effect on the criterion variable, their aim being to generalize from the specific to the universal. Examples of such studies are Mulac and his associates' influential works on "Gender-Linked Language Effect" (e.g., Mulac, Lundell, & Bradac, 1986; Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, & Gibson, 1988; reviewed in this paper) where the main focus of study was to predict the speaker gender based on how her/his speech is rated on three clusters of linguistic traits: "Socio-Intellectual Status," "Aesthetic Quality" and "Dynamism."

This is the type of studies that continue to appear in mainstream journals. But why is that? And how can we account for these studies <u>not</u> being included in the bibliographies noted above, when there are indeed many studies published in communication journals, and when it seems most natural to assume that the communication field should have much to contribute to this issue of gender? What is the worth of these studies and what is their relationship with the feminist scholarship? Or, seen more broadly, the question becomes the politics of the communication field on the expanding issues of women and gender. My purpose here in this essay will be to answer these questions through a closer examination of what is currently being done in this field, especially in the realm of interpersonal communication. First, I will review and attempt to analyze the past five years' studies on gender and communication published in

major communication journals, with special reference on how "gender" is conceptualized in these studies, and the politics concerning where these could be found and what has happened to them. Then I will briefly review the problems and pitfalls of current feminist research. Lastly, I will suggest a proposal for future direction.

A General Overview of Gender Research in Communication: Why and How it is in a "State of Schizophrenia"

When Lana Rakow stated that "(g) ender research in communication is in a state of schizophrenia" (1987, p. 79), she was mainly concerned with the type of methodologies used to conduct research. On the one hand there is the mainstream experimental studies and survey research; and on the other hand, the emergence of feminist scholarship whose commitment is to challenge those methodologies and their underlying assumptions. But it seems that there are more complex factors involved in addition to the problem of methodologies that contribute to the difficulty of seeing any structure or consistency in the way which gender research is being done in the communication field.

First of all, communication itself is interdisciplinary in nature and is "known for its openness to critical debate" (Spitzack & Carter, 1989, p. 11). It is still in the course of development as a domain in social science and is constantly borrowing frameworks and methodologies from other fields. It is the same in dealing with gender: there still seems to be an uncertainty and confusion on what it is that communication

researchers should regard as their objective of studying gender, and on how they should approach the issue (Ting-Toomey, 1987). Ting-Toomey states that two of the critical issues that confront communication and gender research are the need of researchers to address the question of the meaningfulness of their research and the need of developing communication-based theories of gender and sex roles, "with communication as the central focus of inquiry that explains, defines, and modifies sex role development and interaction" (p. 5). The lack of theory may be the reason why even today the distinction between a gender study in communication and that in another field can be fuzzy--we tend to see the difference only in terms of the journals which the studies are published in.

Second, the approaches of studies are not merely a simple dichotomy between quantitative methods and qualitative methods, or even between the androcentric and the feminist approach. It used to be that females were either literally invisible from studies or that female-specific behaviors were explicitly judged as deviant from a male standard. But today, since male-as-the-norm world view has become less acceptable at least ideologically, and very few researchers can "get away with" operating from such a sexist approach, the masculine bias in studies has become obscure and hard to detect. Ironically, it is much more difficult for feminists to accuse a current study as "sexist", since most of the overt manifestations have been eliminated from the surface. The approach used widely now conceptualizes women's communication as being on one end of a scale with men's communication on the other

end. Women and men are "separate but equal." Following this, most researchers now refrain from making statements that refer to women's speech as a deviant from men's standards and treat female as "minus male." The view of female as a separate entity from male seems to have a large appeal to those doing gender research, as I will discuss later in detail. But this approach, although it can take women's experience into account and legitimize the difference, still works from the assumption that men and women can objectively be compared on a single variable using the same measurement--only now the standard is shifted from a blatant males=human beings' behavior to a supposedly sex-neutral human beings' behavior. It has come to a point where feminists must consider the possibility of the whole foundation of scientific research itself being male-centered.

Feminists have further argued that the relationship between the preference of objective science and the masculine value system has been overlooked (e.g., Spitzack & Carter, 1989). Katherine Hawkins (1989) states that the masculine bias in research is enhanced by the association of objectivity with masculinity. The fact that controlled, experimental research is preferred over noncontrolled, descriptive research is one demonstration of the bias (p. 45). According to Spitzack and Carter (1989), the dichotomy of "subjective"- "objective" research, or "soft"- "hard" approach to science is "part of the masculine script" (p. 19). This, combined with feminist ideology leads to the rejection of quantitative methods as *the* only valid way to study gender and communication (Hawkins, 1989; Rakow, 1987), of the belief that

women's reality and experiences could be reduced into numerical data to be generalized across all women and that differences between women and men could be represented by statistically significant differences in the computed scores (however, feminists do recognize that the use of quantitative methods itself does not prevent a study from being feminist; that it can be worthy and constructive [Jayaratne, 1980; Peplau & Conrad, 1989]). Moreover, although communication researchers have lately become critical of the excessive emphasis on quantitative research, the voices of feminists are not acknowledged in the same way as others are. For example, Treichler and Wartella (1986) point out that the influential Ferment in the Field issue of the Journal of Communication, although citing many alternative models to the traditional research paradigm, does not include a single work of feminist scholarship (p. 3).

Lastly, there is a distinct division regarding where and in what type of studies the feminist scholarship and the non-feminist approach can be seen. Papers advocating the use of feminist scholarship are mostly found in "special issues" of widely circulated communication journals (for example, Communication Quarterly, 31; Communications, 9) and in books specifically dealing with women's communication or feminist theory; they do not appear very often in major publications unmarked as something rare and deserving attention. What about actual studies? Can studies actually following the guidelines of feminist scholarship be found on the same ground, among the traditional studies on communication and gender? With these questions in mind, I will now examine more

carefully what can be inferred as the current state of gender research in communication from recent mainstream communication journals.

The Latest News of Gender Research in Communication: A Tour through Mainstream Journals 1986-1990

I have examined seven communication journals for studies on gender and communication: Communication Monographs, Communication Quarterly, Communication Research, Human Communication Research, Quarterly Journal of Speech, The Southern Speech Communication Journal, Western Journal of Speech Communication, and although not a "mainstream journal" because of its limited circulation, Women's Studies in Communication. Here, I do not include the theoretical or review articles but only reports of original studies involving an actual collecting of data. Although there are basically three issues on which gender and communication studies focus (Dobris, 1989), I have omitted studies dealing with the way language treats males and females, and selected those dealing with actual communication of males and females, and those dealing with the stereotypes and perceptions of male and female communication. I have also omitted mass media studies, and only focused on interpersonal communication studies. In other words, I have specifically selected those which dealt with gender in relation to either the actual verbal or nonverbal language use, or the perception of those usages (see Appendix for the list of these studies reviewed).

Major findings in journals.

The most noticeable thing was that the majority of what is published dealing with gender were empirical studies using quantitative methods. These studies were primarily concerned with finding difference in communication behavior that could be attributed to sex differences. Most of them were experimental, using sex as the major independent variable. Seventy-five percent used students for their subjects. Statistical significance between females and males was tested in terms of behaviors and attitudes toward such behaviors as gaze (Mulac, Studley, Wiemann, & Bradac; 1987), interruptions (Dindia, 1987; Hawkins, 1988), transcribed conversations (Zahn, 1989), self-disclosure (Cline, 1986, Wheeless, Zakahi, & Chan, 1988), affinity-seeking strategies (Richmond, Gorham, & Furio; 1987), conflict management (Berryman-Fink & Brunner, 1987; Burggraf & Sillars, 1987; Papa & Natalle, 1989), argumentativeness (Anderson, Shultz, & Staley, 1987; Infante, 1989), testimonies (Johnson & Virson, 1987), verbal influence strategies and persuasion (Andrews, 1987, Harper & Hirokawa, 1988, Newton & Burgoon, 1990), public speeches (Mulac, Lundell, & Bradac, 1986), mediation (Burrell, Donohue, & Allen, 1988), and issues such as trust (Carrocci, 1988), deception and honesty (O'Hair, Cody, Goss, & Krayer, 1988). These studies for the most part apparently took the "nonsexist" approach, without setting up one as the norm and the other as a deviant, or one as superior and developed and the other as inferior and undeveloped. On the surface males and females were treated as different but without presupposed evaluation, and the differences were assumed as legitimate in most of the studies. Interestingly enough,

Women's Studies in Communication had the only two articles in the past five years explicitly stating that women's speech was deficient from men's and that women should be trained to "use powerful speech" (Johnson & Virson, 1987), or to be more argumentative (Anderson, Shultz, & Staley, 1987).

Thorne, Kramarae and Henley in 1983 observed that studies of isolated variables of speech 1) are important in modifying and refuting stereotyped claims about women's speech, 2) have little purpose beyond checking these stereotypes, 3) lead to complex and contradictory results, and 4) have actually substantiated very few expected sex differences (p. 12-13). My review of literature suggests that nothing much has changed in communication journals since then. Most of the research were built upon previous studies looking for sex differences in an isolated variable, by adding, controlling or manipulating differently another variable that may interact with gender (Thorne, Kramarae & Henley, 1983, p. 13). The results are added on to the existing empirical information about how women and men differ on a certain variable, but does not really provide any insightful new knowledge on either the construction of gender or communication.

In addition to the majority of research exploring male/female differences on a general level, there were studies that focused not on sex of the individual subject but on specific relationships involving gender. I found some studies dealing with marital communication using married couples as subjects, for example, Infante, Chandler and Rudd (1989) on argumentative skill and interspousal violence; Shimanoff (1987) on emotional disclosure

and request compliance; Burggraf and Sillars (1987) on marital conflict. Also there were a couple of studies (Booth-Butterfield, 1989; Bringham & Burleson, 1990) dealing with sexual harassment. These differ from studies on isolated variables since they examine the effect of specifically defined role-relationship (husband-wife, male-female in workplace) on communication. For example, in studies using married couples, subjects already have been constructing a relationship through interaction. In the case of sexual harassment, the communication behavior itself intrinsically involves gender, and creates a relationship of which gender and status in the workplace are major elements. In either case, the unit of communicative behavior explored by the researcher is not an isolated entity by itself, but is a part of a certain dynamics.

Despite these studies' emphasis on a specific relationship, however, their method and focus of analysis does not make use of the actual context in which interactions naturally occur. In studies of married couples, researchers did not use naturalistic interaction in a way, for example, DeFrancisco (1990) did for the data, but used experimentally produced and controlled behavior to analyze. In fact, they did not essentially differ from studies aiming to document generalized sex differences in these aspects. One thing noticeable was that many studies attempted to draw in another independent variable in addition to the role assigned by gender (mostly a cognitive construct of the individual, such as cognitive complexity, locus of control; or the couple type in the case of marriage) to categorize the subjects. By mainly looking at the correlation between the type of subject and type of

behavior, they have diverted their attention from the context and undermined its relationship to gender. Another problem is the way the dependent variables (the communication behavior itself or the reaction) were assessed and analyzed. These too were categorized into groups and described in terms of a representative example, ignoring and flattening out the subtle differences. They are removed from the context which produced them and analyzed in a vacuum. Individual communication and responses are framed to fit into one of the presupposed categories. In order to make this task of categorization more "reliable," pencil-and-paper self-report or strategy selection is frequently used as a measure. Although these may assess gender stereotypes of the subjects, they may not give an accurate picture of the influence of the context and the process of interaction. Finally, the studies are mostly using given, hypothetical situations, and not naturally occurring events. Thus, although the whole context was one specifically involving gender, the incident itself became an isolated event. These may be the reason why these studies, despite their different, more context-oriented approach, do not essentially differ from the other majority of studies. The results reported were of the same nature--either there were male/female difference or there were not.

<u>The trend: Gender as culture.</u>

It does seem now that the old research method of studying females by comparing their behavior with male standards is less seen explicitly in recent journal articles. Now the prevailing assumption is that there *is* a difference between males and

females. This trend exists not only in journals. The view is expressed most explicitly in Maltz and Borker (1983): that males and females, as a result of difference in socialization process, can be seen as members of different cultures. Thus, any difference observed between males and females is attributable to *gender* as a cultural entity, separate from biological *sex* (in recent communication research, very few studies use psychological gender as a construct; in my review I found only two: Cline, 1986; Wheeless, Zakahi, & Chan, 1988). This "gender as culture" theory of viewing male/female differences is tempting, since it seems to explain male and female stereotypes nicely without putting neither down while maintaining the status quo as legitimate. It is also an approach that permits women to acknowledge and express the positive values of their behavior (Henley & LaFrance, 1984), and seems to imply a shift from the approach where male's behavior was taken as the norm and women's were deficient, inferior, and deviant. The view of gender as culture has lately become extremely widespread and influential in communication studies (e.g. Mulac, Gibbons, & Fujiyama, 1990), as well as in the context of non-academic belief, as can be seen in the popularity of the works of Deborah Tannen (1987, 1990) whose main thesis is this two-culture view. Most of the journal articles do not explicitly state that they see gender as culture. But their interpretation of sex differences are in mostly in terms of difference in expectations and perceptions resulting from socialization practices.

<u>Males and females: Social equals?</u>

One of the problems with this approach is the false assumption that "female culture" and "male culture" are entities formed independently of each other and that the cultural difference will unquestionably and comprehensively explain any difference on the behavioral level. It should be remembered that males and females are not isolated during socialization; and just being biologically born male or female does not explain the reason why they are treated, brought up, and expected to behave in a different manner. Another problem is the naive way of looking at culture; that cultures exist independent of power relationship. Viewing males and females as different cultures does not necessarily mean that both must have equal social power. But somehow this theory believes that the notion of culture and dominance are mutually exclusive.

This gender as culture approach attempts to solve (or at least explain) the problem of cross-sex "miscommunication" drawing its analogy with cross-cultural miscommunication. But it does not explain why the "miscommunication" between the sexes results in, more often than not, negative stereotypes of women or even worse, physical or/and psychological violence against women. It does not explain why it is femininity, and not masculinity, that is associated with such traits as weakness, passivity, expressiveness, friendliness, insecurity, etc. It does not explain why it is that while the speech characteristics of women are viewed as more socially desirable than men's, and the preferred speech for a competent sex-unspecified adult resembled stereotypical female speech more than male speech (Scott, 1980),

there is still the widely-held belief that the stereotypical female speech is inferior and ineffective. As Henley and Kramarae (1991) state, "cultural differences alone cannot adequately explain the full pattern of language difference and miscommunication" (p. 27). The analysis is incomplete without taking the issue of power into consideration--there is the suspect that gender might have been constructed and the male-female difference stressed in order that one group could dominate the other (Henley, 1977), since an observable difference must precede inequality. But this is the very issue that gender as culture theory strangely and strongly negates.

Gender as culture theory assumes that male-female interaction is interaction between social equals. The term "social equals" actually has a dual meaning. It could mean "ideally equal, equal in principle," and it could also mean "of equal status in reality." The former being true does not necessarily mean the latter is true as well. The existence of inequality between the sexes, in reality, is clear by looking at the type of communication style attributed to females as opposed to males. Henley and Kramarae (1991) make this point:

> Hierarchies determine whose version of the communication situation will prevail; whose speech style will be seen as normal; who will be required to learn the communication style, and interpret the meaning of the other; whose language style will be seen as deviant, irrational, and inferior; and who will be required to imitate the other's style in order to fit into the society (pp. 19-20).

Gender as culture theory diverts our attention from the power, and thus political, dimension of gender. And that is what is done in current journal articles.

In search of difference.

Another problem with gender as culture theory is that it allows one to analyze male-female communication in the same way as one does in cross-cultural studies. There is a strong preference towards describing and analyzing "a culture" by focusing on the difference found in contrast with another culture. The concept of males and females as different cultural entities leads to their comparison on some variable without questioning the assumption that it is appropriate to study women and men on the same dimensions (Scult, 1986); and to the conducting of a study in search of "statistically significant" difference. Scult (1986) also states that in social sciences there is a bias *toward* studies that compare males and females. But since we base our judgements on our own assumptions that males and females are different, the results serve only as a confirmation of our assumptions (if a difference was observed), or they will tell us that the behavior studied did not happen to manifest sex differences (if none was observed). In either way, they reveal nothing new about our subjects. No matter what the results, our basic assumptions are not challenged but merely reinforced.

These problems seem to highlight a major point that may be an overlooked reason why interpersonal communication studies searching gender differences keep producing results that are contradictory with one another. There is a prevailing confusion

of what *gender* is among these studies in journals. I will now attempt to point out this confusion: namely, the inconsistency in the ways the studies in communication journals are conceptualizing gender, operationalizing it as the variable, and drawing inferences from the results based on gender.

Gender and Sex: Biology or Culture?

The widely held view is that "gender is a biologically determined, culturally modified given characteristic of individuals that causes them to think and act in certain ways" (Rakow, 1987, p. 80). According to this view, *gender* is a cultural construct built upon biological sex during socialization. But very often even the distinction between "biological sex" and "cultural gender" is left ambiguous. It seems that the term *gender* has come to be used as an alternative to *sex* when researchers started recognizing that male/female differences are socioculturally rather than biologically based (Scult, 1986). According to Pearson (1985), *gender* is favored over *sex* because unlike *sex* it cannot be confused with coital behavior and because the word "is broad enough to include psychological as well as biological differences between persons" (p. 11). Many of the studies I reviewed used *sex* and *gender* interchangeably, and almost none ever clearly distinguished between the two concepts but rather assumed that one (biological sex) preceded and determined the other (gender) so there was no need to deal with them separately.

But it seems to me that this failure of distinction lead to the loss of the whole notion of *gender*. If *gender* is social and cultural, then the analyses of males' and females' communication

must be done in terms of *gender*, since communication is a social and cultural activity. Moreover, as Bate and Taylor (1988) observed, communication is the means by which we are taught how to relate to a gender ideal, and it continues to affect how we view ourselves in reflection to these gender ideals (p. 3). Studies on male and female differences in communication must, then, look for *gender* differences. That seems to be what the studies I reviewed were trying to do; they were interested in documenting how the difference would be manifested in communication behavior. But in their methods used to assess the behavior, in their traditional way of operationalizing gender as a variable, as a pregiven category (Rakow, 1986), as that to be assessed by "asking subjects to mark 'male' or 'female' on a questionnaire" (Foss, 1989, p. 2), they are dealing with *sex* instead of *gender*. In studies where instant, artificial situations are created for the subjects to be placed in an isolated context with no previous interaction with each other (nor in most cases, future interaction), the subjects are categorized in terms of their biological sex and not their sociocultural gender. Gender as a construct is activated in the social world of ongoing interaction, not in a vacuum where the contextual, historical element crucial in relationships is eliminated. Therefore it seems highly inappropriate, or even misleading, for these studies to attempt to use *gender* as the basis of analysis. Yet in many of the empirical studies, the *sex* of the subject was the critical independent variable while the results were seen and interpreted in terms of *gender*. This might have been one of the causes of inconsistencies in results; there

was a discrepancy in the way the subjects were categorized and in the way the responses were elicited and categorized.

Who are the "researched"? Problems with subjects.

Another thing related to this problem in conceptualizing gender is the selection of subjects used in the studies. There are two practices commonly used that seem worthy of inspection. First, it was the major trend to use students (usually enrolled in communication courses) as participants when the purpose was to find generalizable sex difference. It is understandable that the students are the type of subjects that researchers have the easiest access to, given the constraints of doing any type of study. And probably researchers do regard their student sample as a limit to the generalizability and feel the need for some qualification for the results, although today with so many precedents it has almost become a common sense for the reader. But the concept underlying this is that it is appropriate to assume that female and male students represent women and men. If we are concerned with biological sex, it would be--physiologically, female students to male students are what female human beings are to male human beings. But if we are studying communication, which is not linked with *sex* but with *gender*, we should consider how the status of being a student interacts with gender and communication. Of the studies using student subjects that I reviewed, only one (Richmond, Gorham, & Furio, 1987) seemed to take into consideration the fact that they were dealing with a specific sample. The unquestioned assumption that female-male differences found in college students (or any specific group of

people) could be generalized into unqualified female-male differences is another manifestation of confusing biological sex with gender.

The second issue on the selection of subjects is their homogeneity across the studies. It is true that statistical tests will have more power if the subjects were controlled on as many potentially contaminating variables as possible. Students, in this respect, are ideal samples because their age, interests, social status, norms and values can be held relatively constant. It could be said that differences due solely to gender would be detected more precisely. But again it must be remembered that the differences detected were differences observed in the specific sample. Students are only one of many other subgroups composed of females and males who engage in daily communication. In the mainstream communication journals I reviewed, there was no variety in the subjects studied--there was hardly any regard for subjects other than students, married couples, manager-worker pairs from organizations, and children. For the most part they were either white and middle-class, or the difference in socioeconomic status and ethnicity were converged together. There was only one study that dealt with cultural ancestry (Miller, Reynolds, & Cambra, 1987). Although gender (for those who separate the concept from biology) is inseparatable from culture, most studies do not bother to look at different cultures, even those within the United States, such as Blacks, Latino, or Asian-American, to categorize loosely. The underlying assumption seems to be that the one system of differentiating females from males holds true in

general, because biologically human beings are either females or males universally. Again there is a confusion of sex with gender, but also there is a prevailing assumption that white, middle-class individuals are the norm, either male or female. This holds true for not only studies on gender but for all communication studies in general. And although feminists have been calling attention to the male-centered bias in research paradigms, it is only recently and after the vocalization of "women of color" that the white/Anglo/western centeredness has begun to be realized as "bias". Whether this had been overlooked because the white/Anglo/western people were thought as adequate representations of the human race (or Americans) or because they were thought as *the* human race (or Americans) is unclear, but it certainly seems to limit the generalizability of the results.

Summary of the findings.

To summarize, the majority of studies found in mainstream communication journals tended to: 1) focus on producing and documenting male/female differences, 2) focus on general, rather than context-specific, results, 3) use experimental, artificial designs, 4) take the gender as culture viewpoint, 5) confuse sex with gender, and 6) use white, middle-class Americans as subjects. The general trend was to operate from the positivist, traditional paradigm of science, in search of an objective, universal truth and rules for explaining the reality that exists equally for all human beings. The results of these studies showed somewhat significant differences between the *sexes*, but these differences were small in magnitude and often inconsistent, either with other

studies or with general stereotypes. Moreover, those differences found seemed more attributable to factors other than gender. For the most part the analyses stopped there, since the aim of the research was to confirm the hypothesis that there is a difference in behavior because there is a difference in gender, and actually revealed nothing about gender and communication than the fuzziness on male/female differences. These seem to be the shortcomings of the present state of research and perhaps the reason why they do not seem to contribute largely to the growth of neither the field of communication nor gender studies.

What is, then, the alternative way of studying gender and communication? This is where the feminist scholarship comes in. And the irony is that the very characteristics of feminist scholarship that compensate the problems of the traditional studies may be actually keeping feminist scholarship out of the mainstream journals--especially in practice.

The Feminist Theory as an Alternative: Gender as Communication Theory.

As seen above, the conceptualization of *gender* was the major problem in gender and communication studies in journals. Therefore it is necessary that feminist scholarship offer another theory of gender in terms of communication. For feminist researchers in communication, gender is not a pre-existing attribute of persons that causes certain behaviors. Rakow (1986) says that gender is "a culturally constructed organization of biology and social life into particular ways of doing, thinking,

and experiencing the world... (i)t is in communication that this gender system is accomplished" (p. 23). Deaux and Major (1987) offer an interaction-based model which conceptualize gender as "a component of ongoing interactions in which perceivers emit expectancies, targets (selves) negotiate their own identities, and the context in which interaction occurs shapes the resultant behavior" (p. 369). In other words, "gender does not cause communication practices, gender is a communication practice" (Rakow, 1987). Gender is constructed within the context of communication and is an element of relationship, not an attribute of an individual. Note that this theory does not separate "culture" and "power" or emphasize one over the other but attempts to integrate the two holistically. "Power" difference is one element of female "culture," and "cultural" difference can either reinforce or mitigate the power relationship between the sexes--but those are constituents of *gender* as a communication act. This "gender as communication" theory should guide the feminist research on gender and communication.

Gender Politics in Communication.

Now the question becomes, where can we find feminist scholarship in gender and communication? As noted earlier, in mainstream communication journals from 1986 to 1990 that I reviewed, there was no interpersonal communication studies explicitly applying feminist framework (although there was one in rhetoric on political debate [Sullivan, 1989]. Also I found a critical review for assertiveness training for women in a psychology journal

[Gervasio & Crawford, 1989]). What I did find in communication journals however, were works on theorizing and proposing feminist scholarship (e.g., Rakow, 1986, 1987; Spitzack & Carter, 1987), and special issues of journals devoted exclusively to such papers (e.g., Communication, 9, 1986; Women's Studies in Communication, 11, 1988; 12, 1989).

It seems that questioning and challenging the prevailing assumptions and world views on which the mainstream research is founded is acceptable in theory, but not in practice. The application of methods suggested by feminist scholarship to one's own research is not permitted, if the study is to be published in a mainstream journal. It is as though articles on feminist theory is dealt as tokens in journals occasionally in "special issues", just to show that the journal is not biased against feminist scholarship. If we wanted to find feminist scholarship elsewhere in larger quantity, we would have to turn to specifically edited books and feminist conferences. Although such books and conferences are increasing in number and their audiences, the overtly institutionalized distinction of feminist scholarship politically serves to restrict the type of students who will be exposed to its studies. This becomes a problem since students in the communication field (or in any field) take the studies published in mainstream journals as authentic and legitimate, being unaware of the criteria used to prefer an article over another for acceptance. There is no way to know what other types of studies are being done and what these findings are, or whether other types of studies are being done at all.

So what is actually happening here? What is the cause of this segregation of feminist scholarship? There are at least two possible reasons which are not mutually exclusive: accommodation on the part of researchers (Foss and Foss, 1989) and gatekeeping on the part of mainstream journals (Spender, 1981), both reinforcing the other. There are several charges against feminist scholarship that serve as the rationale for the practice of mainstream journals: that feminist scholarship is not scientific, not concerned about the general human behavior but only about a specific group (although studies only concerned about males were acceptable as "general"), biased and political (Spitzack & Carter, 1987). It is exactly these features that make a study "feminist"--it seems that these charges are not criticism but denying or refusal of admitting the existence of feminist scholarship, which, by offering an alternative view of the world and alternative way of knowing, threatens the dominance of the traditional paradigm of science. But as long as the gatekeeping continues to be in the hands of those who advocate traditional research paradigm, the cycle will continue and the feminist scholarship will remain in the margins of mainstream research. Feminists are in a double bind here: their scholarship is not accepted as the mainstream, or they are accepted at the expense of their identity. But what is regarded as mainstream is constantly changing: it seems that we may now be in the state of transition.

The Research, Researcher, and the Researched of the Future: A Conclusion.

The feminist scholarship, despite its struggle to gain acknowledgement from the mainstream communication discipline, seems to be in the course of progress and recognition as a valid approach to gender and communication research. Its potential of making a major contribution to the communication field by offering "gender as communication" theory is especially promising. This should provide a conceptual framework that had been lacking in gender studies in communication. This possibility should be stressed and demonstrated in effort to not only contribute to the growth of the field but also to counter the gatekeeping and make the scholarship's way into the mainstream journals. There are, however, some possible pitfalls that should be kept in mind in the advocacy of feminist scholarship. This is related to the last problem seen in traditional gender and communication studies that feminist scholarship has so far failed to criticize as vocally: the problem of who are being researched as subjects.

One thing we should be aware of is who we mean by the word "women" and what is our own assumptions about who constitutes the social group called "women" (Kramarae, 1989). When we say that feminist research is "research <u>for</u> women," whose oppression do we want to end? When we say that feminists address women's own lives and experiences in their own words, whose lives and experiences and words are we talking about? Recently there has been grave debates about who is included in "women"--with claims that these unqualified "women" only included the white western women, or it was assumed that their standards were universally applicable to all women. Those not included were made invisible and nonexistent

or "placed at the periphery of the circle in spoken and written descriptions and analyses" (Kramarae, 1989). We can draw a parallel between the traditional treatment of women by men and the treatment of non-white, non-western women by white women, or more generally, the treatment of non-western cultures by western cultures. Uma Narayan (1988) calls this western attitude "the missionary position" which is a stance where western feminists "judge our institutions western standards applied uncritically, and end up neither able to see anything of value in our culture nor being able to assess what our real problems are" (p. 9). This position of imposing the value system of the dominant to others and establishing a dichotomy of researcher and the researched is of the same nature of the masculine bias that the feminists sought to reject and free themselves from; which completely contradicts with the feminist perspective. "Just as men assumed a perspective which was male for all of humankind, feminists must not make the same mistake of assuming for all women a perspective that is white, middle-class, and Western" (Penfield, 1987, p. 199). And this warning cannot be voiced too loudly; it is only recently that feminists started to question this assumption.

Women of color are almost invisible in the communication literature as well, and this exclusion perpetuates the myth that women's communication experiences are the same in every social and ethnic group (Stanback, 1988). So far there have been very few papers that calls attention to the interaction of gender, class, and ethnicity. While realizing that women were regarded as deviations from the male standard and "marked" as a category, few

feminists acknowledged that the category "white" was as unmarked as "male" in their discourse. Marsha Stanback (1988) notes:

> Communication scholars do not identify their work as research on "white communication" or "white women's communication." Yet much of what passes for inclusive studies of the communication process or of the communication of women are based upon samples that are exclusively white. (It is common practice to "throw out" data from non-white participants to avoid "error.") To submit an article based upon a sample that is exclusively black is to open oneself to the scrutiny of editors who are disinclined to devote precious journal space to "specialized" research (p. 30).

We must remember that while the category of "women" represents people who are the oppressed and the dominated under the patriarchal system of society, patriarchy works differently for women of different cultures. Indicators for equality or subordination are not necessarily the same everywhere (Schlegel, 1989). Joke Huisman (1987) says that feminist scholarship is still feeling obliged to search universal laws, "contaminated by the current tendency in Western culture to overrate the general, universal and immanent at the cost of the transcendental, pluriform and specific" (p. 135). Attempts to standardize and compare will only lead to a distorted picture of certain women. The feminist perspective must be applied more widely, not only to women of our "in-group" but also to women in various other groups, in order to benefit all women. Feminism contradicts itself if it only addresses a privileged few. For those who are doing research

on gender and communication from a feminist perspective, women's communication must be studied in terms of how it constructs not only gender but also their cultural, racial, and social identity and their interaction with gender. I feel that the term "global feminism" is a tautology; feminism must be of itself "global" if it truly is what it claims to be.

Appendix. Reports of studies focusing on gender in interpersonal communication published in communication journals 1986-1990.

Communication Monographs

Mulac, A., Lundell, T. L., and Bradac, J. J., "Male/female differences and attributional consequences in a public speaking situation: Toward and explanation of the gender-linked language effect" 53 (June 1986).

Street, Jr., R. L., and Murphy, T. L., "Interpersonal orientation and speech behavior" 54 (March 1987).

Shimanoff, S. B., "Types of emotional disclosures and request compliance between spouses" 54 (March 1987).

Miller, M. D., Reynolds, R. A., and Cambra, R. E., "The influence of gender and culture on language intensity" 54 (March 1987).

Burggraf. C. S., and Sillars, A. L., "A critical examination of sex differences in marital communication" 54 (Sept. 1987).

Zahn, C. J., "The bases for differing evaluations of male and female speech: Evidence from ratings of transcribed conversation" 56 (March 1989).

Infante, D. A., Chandler, T. A., and Rudd, J. E., "Test of argumentative skill deficiency model of interspousal violence" 56 (June 1989).

Communication Research

Burrell, N. A. Donohue, U. A., & Allen, M. "Gender-based perceptual biases in mediation" 15 (August 1988).

Communication Quarterly

Cline, R. J., "The effects of biological sex and psychological gender on reported and behavioral intimacy and control of self-disclosure" 34 (Winter 1986).

Richmond, V. P., Gorham, J. S., and Furio, B. J., "Affinity-seeking communication in collegiate female-male relationships" 35 (Fall 1987).

O'Hair, D., Cody, M. J., Goss, B., & Krayer, K. J., "The effect of gender, deceit orientation and communication style on macro-assessments of honesty" 36 (Spring 1988).

Wheeless, V. E., Zakahi, W. R., & Chan, M. B., "A test of self-disclosure based on perceptions of a target's loneliness and gender orientation" 36 (Spring 1988).

Harper, N. L. & Hirokawa, R. Y., "A comparison of persuasive strategies used by female and male managers I: An explanation of downward influence" 36 (Spring 1988).

Staley, C. C. & Cohen, J. L., "Communicator style and social style: Similarities and differences between the sexes" 36 (Summer 1988).

Booth-Butterfield, M., "Perception of harassing communication as a function of locus of control, work force participation, and gender" 37 (Fall 1989).

Human Communication Research

Mulac, A., Studley, L. B., Wiemann, J. M., and Bradac, J. J., "Male/female gaze in same-sex and mixed-sex dyads: Gender-linked differences and mutual influence" 13 (Spring 1987)

Dindia, K., "The effects of sex of subject and sex of partner on interruptions" 13 (Spring 1987).

Andrews, P. H., "Gender differences in persuasive communication and attribution of success and failure" 13 (Spring 1987).

Bringham, S. G. and Burleson, B. R., "Multiple effects of messages with multiple goals: Some perceived outcomes or responses to sexual harassment" 16 (Winter 1989).

Newton, D. A. and Burgoon, J. K., "The use and consequences of verbal influence strategies during interpersonal disagreements" 16 (Summer 1990).

Quarterly Journal of Speech

No reports of studies found.

The Southern Speech Communication Journal

Berryman-Fink, C., and Brunner, C. C., "The effects of sex of source and target on interpersonal conflict management styles" 53 (Fall 1987).

Infante, D. A., "Response to high argumentatives: Message and sex differences" 54 (Winter 1989).

Western Journal of Speech Communication

Arntson, P., and Turner, L. H., "Sex role socialization: children's enactments of their parents' behaviors in a regulative and interpersonal context" 51 (Summer 1987).

Lamude, K. G., Daniels, T. D., and Graham, E. E., "The paradoxical influence of sex on communication rules coorientation and communication satisfaction in superior-subordinate relationships" 52 (Spring 1988).

Papa, M. J., and Natalle, E. J., "Gender, strategy selection, and discussion satisfaction in interpersonal conflict" 53 (1989).

Women's Studies in Communication

Owen, W. F., "The verbal expression of love by women and men as a critical communication event in personal relationships" 10 (Spring 1987).

Johnson, C., and Virson, L., "'Damned if you do, damned if you don't?': Status, powerful speech, and evaluations of female witnesses " 10 (Spring 1987).

Anderson, J., Shultz, B., and Staley, C. C., "Training in argumentativeness: New hope for nonassertive women" 10 (Fall 1987).

Hawkins, K., "Interruptions in task-oriented conversations: Effects of violations of expectations by males and females" 11 (Fall 1988).

Carrocci, N. M., "Trust and gender ten years later: The more things change..." 11 (Fall 1988).

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